1: Glacken E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 AC7 Okinawa AC7

away evil spirits (bakemono).[1] From the pig sty the child is then taken to the kitchen, where a pot of rice has been cooking. Soot from the outside of the pot is taken up with the middle finger of the right hand and a round black spot pressed on the forehead above the bridge of the nose between the eyebrows. The reason for this could not be ascertained.

Beliefs in the power of a pig sty to ward off evil spirits are still held in Minatogawa and the customs were generally practiced up to the beginning of the war. But these beliefs were related more to celebrations following the birth of the child than to the birth itself. The elements of these beliefs seemed to be that the afterworld was close to this world. If a child were not protected, the spirits of the afterworld would steal the child and take him back. The party celebrating the birth lasted a whole week, usually starting each evening about 8 and ending at 8 the following morning. Guests stayed up all night to prevent the child from being stolen, for if anyone went to sleep, the spirit would enter. Spirits followed behind the guest and were especially dangerous after 10 at night. The spirits however were frightened by the pigs; guests arriving during the danger hours went to the pig pen first to scare off the spirit following them, before entering the house. There was no evidence, in the parties I attended, of any present observance of this custom by young parents. The week of all night parties is no longer held.

These beliefs were found in Minatogawa. Hanashiro informants had heard of such customs, but were vague about them. While their seeming absence in Matsuda may be due to incomplete data, there may be another explanation. These beliefs may have been picked up by fishing people from other sources.

One other birth custom known as jiru belongs to the recent history of the island. Jiru, as explained in Chapter V, is a fire place sunk in the floor of an Okinawan house, often in the corner of the dining room which adjoins a hall or a sleeping room, and near the kitchen. Convalescence was called jiru because mother and child warmed themselves by the device. Today convalescence may be called jiru, though it has nothing to do with the old custom, which in the literature has been referred to as "roasting."

1 When I discussed this and the following beliefs relating to pigs with people in Matsuda, they ridiculed them and said there was no truth in it, implying that people in the south did not know what they were talking about. Subsequent rechecking convinced me that this was not so and that the beliefs in Minatogawa represent differences in the rural culture.

Although Okinawans occasionally refer to Heaven or the Gods of Heaven (J. 'Ten no kami-sama'; Okinawan U-kami-ganashii, etc.), the concept does not seem to be well defined. The clearest statement heard on the subject was the one just mentioned in connection with the Fire God. Since the dead, or some of them, rise to Heaven, the term "Gods of Heaven" may include them, but there are evidently other greater beings too. These may be identical with the figures of the native origin myth. But aside from a few enthusiasts, mainly local historians and shamans (yuta), few Okinawans seem informed about or concerned with native cosmology, or any other. This may in part be the result of a generation or so of Japanese education with educators attempting to take the Japanese mythology seriously and making Okinawan mythology jibe with it. But it is more likely that this lack of concern with Heaven is due rather to an old tendency common in East Asia to settle matters at the local level without bothering the higher authorities, in dealing with both political problems and spiritual problems.

In the Okinawan universe there are also a few earthly beings with supernatural power. The akamataa is a real species of non-poisonous snake. But it is believed to be able to change itself into a handsome young man, in which form it seduces unwitting young women. One young woman who was seduced is said to have given birth to a whole tubful of baby akamataa.

The kijimunaa is a wholly mythical being but seems to belong more in the natural world. According to some it lives in old trees, but according to others it is a sea-being who lives on fish and shellfish and who will become the helper of a fisherman who makes friends with it. Regardless of habitat, the kijimunaa is believed to approach a sleeping person and sit on his chest, nearly suffocating him and preventing him from crying out. Apparently the being is not dangerous but merely annoying.

Another being that is feared is the tamagai or 'hidama', "fireball". This was described in Yamada as a light that appears at certain times as an omen. However, in a village in Southern Okinawa it is regarded as the cause of fire. Since it is a female being the young men of this village drive it away by forming a procession and marching through the village shouting "Hoo hai!" ("Your vulva's showing.")

The Itoman people speak of the ja or 'ryu', the "dragon". This being lives in the sea or the clouds; its tail is the whirlwind; its feces, if one is fortunate enough to find them; are like coal tar and are a very valuable medicine. Other Okinawans seem to regard this as something only the Itoman people know about.

One more concept is perhaps worth mentioning; this is shiji. Certain places, the sacred hilltop of the village, etc., are said to be shiji-dakasang, "high in shiji", and therefore to be approached with respect. It is also said of persons, especially those believed to be destined to become religious practitioners. The term shiji evidently signifies a sort of supernatural power that adheres to places and people, perhaps like the Oceanian concept "mana". Haring has suggested that the Japanese concept